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THIS IS TJ MILLER'S SERIOUS FACE

'The Emoji Movie' star has some good advice for kids. 16

East Passyunk Car Show. 23

Eagles make changes before veterans report to camp. 28

GAME ON

This weekend, video gamers will arrive in Philadelphia to participate in what is being called the largest-ever gaming tournament. 4

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Make your Staycation a Playcation

Page 5

WELCOME TO METRO.US!

KIMBERLY M. AQUILINA, WEB REPORTER

Dating is hard. I do it so you don't have to. (You're welcome.) While poking around for offline dating ideas, I found something hot ... firemen! Here's what happened when I tried the "Rescue Me" singles mixer.

Metro.us/things-to-do

TRUMP: TRANSGENDERS BANNED IN US MILITARY

President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he would not permit transgender people to serve in the U.S. military, citing "tremendous medical costs and disruption," an action condemned by critics as "raw prejudice" and a political stunt. It was not the first time Trump had targeted transgender people since taking office in January. The Republican president in February rescinded protections for transgender students put in place by his predecessor, Democrat Barack Obama, that had let them use bathrooms corresponding with their gender identity. "After consultation with my generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military," Trump wrote in a series of Twitter posts." ***For more, see page 4***

SENATE AIMS FOR 'SKINNY' OBAMACARE REPEAL

2 Republican U.S. Senate leaders, struggling to keep a seven-year-old promise to end Obamacare, turned their focus on Wednesday to passing a slimmed-down "skinny" repeal measure that would throw the issue into negotiations with the House of Representatives. The last-ditch effort came as senators voted 45-55 against a straight repeal of Obamacare, which provided for a two-year delay in implementation to give Congress time to work out a replacement. Seven Republicans opposed the measure. It was the Senate's second failure in 24 hours to repeal the 2010 law popularly known as Obamacare, which expanded health insurance to about 20 million people, many of them low-income. On Tuesday, senators rejected the repeal-and-replace plan Republicans had been working on since May.

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

PONY SWIM

3 Assateague wild ponies cross the Assateague Channel during the annual Chincoteague Island Pony Swim in Chincoteague Island, Virginia, on Wednesday.

TILLERSON SAYS HE IS 'NOT GOING ANYWHERE'

4 Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that he was "not going anywhere," denying news reports that he was considering leaving his post. "I'm not going anywhere," Tillerson told reporters at the State Department. Asked how long he would stay on, Tillerson turned and smiled, saying, "As long as the president lets me." Asked about his relationship with President Donald Trump, Tillerson said simply, "Good."

The speculation over Tillerson's remaining in Trump's cabinet came after days of Trump publicly attacking Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Trump said Sessions had "taken a VERY weak position" on investigating his former opponent in the 2016 presidential election, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, over her use of a private email server.

STRICTER ELECTRONIC CARRY-ON SCREENING

5 The U.S. Transportation Security Administration said it will impose new stricter security rules requiring airline travelers to remove all electronic items larger than mobile phones like tablets, e-readers and video game consoles from carry-on baggage for screening. Prior rules required only laptops to be removed for separate screening. The new rules significantly expand the number of electronic devices that will need to be removed for screening and help government employees get a clearer view during X-ray screening. TSA said the new rules have been in place in a pilot project at 10 U.S. airports including Detroit, Los Angeles, Boston and Phoenix, and will expand to all U.S. airports in the months ahead. The new enhanced security rules at U.S. airports only apply at standard security lanes.

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N3rd Street will be hosting a video game competition. OLD CITY DISTRICT

'Largest-ever' gaming tournament comes to Philly

This weekend, Philadelphia's N3rd Street Gamers will host the largest gaming tournament they have ever presented.

HAYDEN MITMAN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

This weekend, on a 33-acre lot just outside Philadelphia, hundreds will die, hunted down by their friends and fellow competitors, over the course of three days.

That's just what happens in a video game tournament.

From Friday through Sunday, N3rd Street Gamers will present its Summer Championship, an event featuring hundreds of gamers — both professional and amateur — as well as four different games and more than $65,000 in prizes.

"This is our largest event ever. It went from being overwhelming to seeing the pieces fall into place," said event organizer Robert Hilsky. "Now, I'm just excited to see it all come together."

Hilsky said that organizers are expecting a turnout of about 1,000 to the upcoming event, which will be held at SunCenter Studios in Aston. The event will include separate tournaments for four different games — Fragadelphia 11, a tournament for teams playing the military shooter Counter-Strike; Cheesadelphia 5, a player versus player competition on the real-time strategy game, StarCraft; Boostadelphia, a two on two event for players playing the car-soccer game, Rocket League and finally, the Brotherly Brawl, a one on one tournament in the card-battle game Hearthstone.

It is the 11th Counter-Strike tournament and fifth StarCraft tournament that N3rd Street Gamers have organized and, Hilsky said, as the popularity of gaming grows, they wanted to add new tournaments for Hearthstone and Rocket League as well.

There will also be a virtual reality arcade, a player and spectator lounge and a food court.

As gaming grows in popularity, real-life spectators seem to flocking to e-sports to cheer on their favorite player or teams. Hilsky said that in just the last three Fragadelphia tournaments alone, he's seen spectatorship grow three-fold.

"This went from being a local, hobby event to something that is practically international," he said.

In previous tournaments, he said, teams from Brazil, England, South Korea and Germany have attended to participate in the events.

"We have guys from South Korea coming in to beat up on North America," Helsky said.

> *"This went from being a local, hobby event to something that is practically international."*
> Robert Hilsky

Already, he said, 40 teams of five have signed up for this weekend's Fragadelphia event, while 60 players are set for Cheesadelphia, 16 teams of two are expected for Boostaqdelphia and another 64 players for the Brotherly Brawl.

While professional gamers will be part of this weekend's event, Hilsky said that the goal of these tournaments, since the beginning, were always to be inclusive affairs that can act as a way to help casual players enter the world of competitive gaming.

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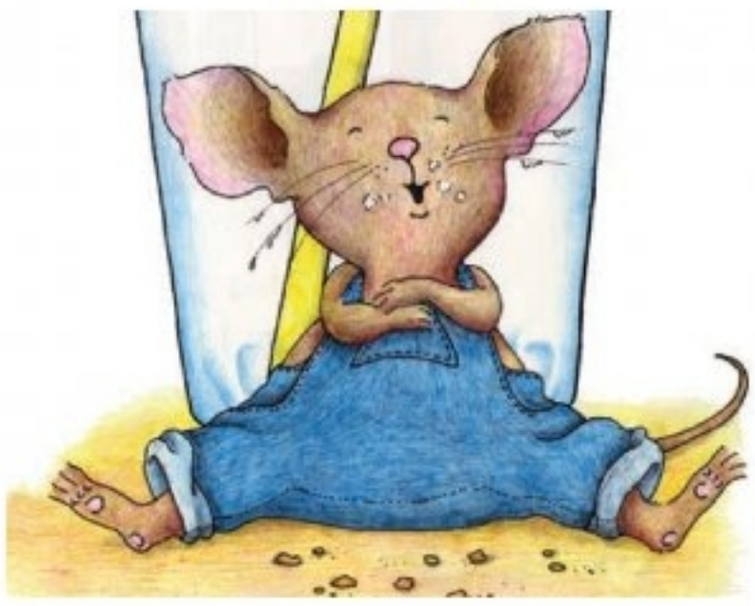

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Transgender ban could face legal challenge

A protester displays a placard during a demonstration against US President Donald Trump in front of the US Army career center in Times Square, New York, on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

Experts say singling out transgender people would violate their rights to equal protection as guaranteed by the Constitution.

President Donald Trump's announcement on Wednesday on banning transgender people from serving in the U.S. military unleashed a storm of legal threats from advocates who say they are seeking plaintiffs who want to file suit.

Trump's surprise tweets did not make clear when a ban reversing former President Barack Obama's policy would go into effect, nor whether it applies to serving members of the military or those wishing to join.

But if the U.S. Defense Department actively roots out transgender people and discharges them from the military, the Pentagon is likely to face an especially contentious fight, legal experts say.

"There's no valid justification for excluding transgender people from the military," said Jon Davidson, legal director for LGBT rights group Lambda Legal. "They are currently serving without a problem. There hasn't been an extraordinary cost. There hasn't been disruption."

Joshua Block at the American Civil Liberties Union said his inbox was flooded with emails about Trump's ban, including from service members.

"I think the most important thing for people to understand is that for the immediate future, nothing can happen to them ... Trump's tweet is not self-executing," said Block, a senior staff attorney on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender [LGBT] issues.

Under Obama, the Defense Department declared in June 20016 that transgender people could serve openly in the armed forces. The Pentagon was considering a second step of allowing openly transgender people to enlist when Trump on Wednesday issued three tweets saying transgender people would not be allowed to serve any capacity in the military, citing disruptions and medical costs.

The Pentagon referred all questions to the White House, where press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump made the decision in consultation with his national security team and that the Defense Department would work with the White House and take the lead on a lawful implementation.

Sarah Warbelow, the Human Rights Campaign's legal director, said Trump's declaration amounted to "discrimination on the basis of sex and identity," and was therefore open to legal challenge.

"The courts do provide quite a bit of deference to the military in determining its own policies," she said. "However, that doesn't mean the military is above the law." REUTERS

TWEETS

@Caitlyn_Jenner There are 15,000 patriotic transgender Americans in the US military fighting for all of us. What happened to your promise to fight for them?

Harold Slutsky, DMD ORTHODONTIST

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South Ruby Street in West Philadelphia GOOGLE MAPS

Two survive row house collapse in West Philadelphia

A "Love Letter" mural was destroyed in the early morning collapse of the home.

HAYDEN MITMAN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

A West Philadelphia couple reportedly escaped uninjured after their home collapsed early Wednesday morning, thanks to a timely warning from their cat.

According to several reports, at about 4:45 a.m., a row home collapsed along the unit block of South Ruby Street in West Philadelphia as two people slept inside. As reported by NBC Philadelphia, the couple was rescued by a passerby who helped them escape from the rubble after a load-bearing wall crumbled, causing the home to fall.

The couple's cat Baxter reportedly woke them up to the sound of cracking in the house around them, according to Fox29.

A woman who lived in the home reportedly told ABC News that she heard a "creaking" and thought her cat was acting funny shortly before the collapse.

A mural along the side of the home that read "I wanna call you names" was destroyed in the collapse. It was part of artist Steve Powers' 50-mural "A Love Letter For You" series for the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program.

Contacted Wednesday morning, a representative from the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections said the department is currently investigating the collapse.

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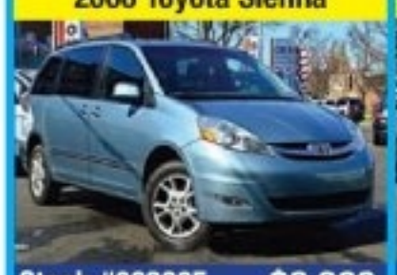

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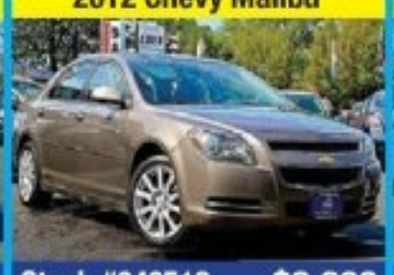

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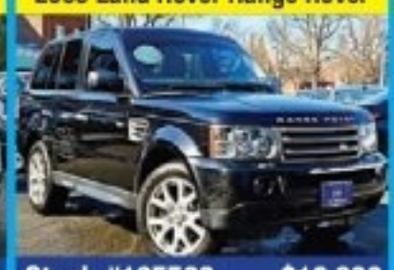

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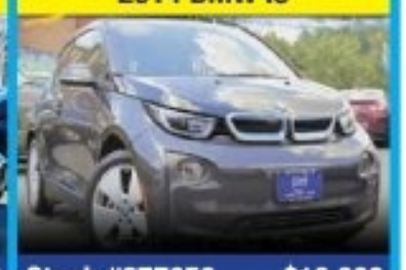

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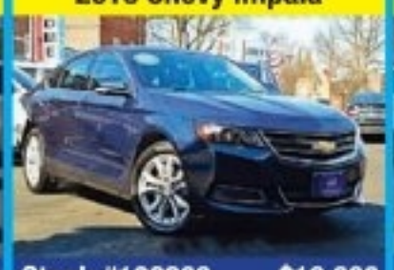

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Lancaster SPCA shuts its doors

Citing a "failed business model," the animal shelter plans to close by mid-August.

HAYDEN MITMAN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

A mini-pinscher recently adopted out of the Lancaster SPCA, which is closing its doors next month. PROVIDED

This week, the Lancaster County SPCA announced plans to close, citing a failed business model and lack of funding.

While all 13 employees will lose their jobs, news of the animal shelter's impending shutdown led to an outpouring of support for animals in need of homes, shelter spokeswoman Jennifer Ericson said.

All animals that were available for adoption at the shelter have already been adopted just a day after the announcement — though, she said, a few cats and dogs are still being evaluated and will become available for adoption in the near future.

"It has been a fantastic response," she said Wednesday. "I can't be happier with how the public responded."

On Tuesday alone, she said, the shelter saw 31 adoptions – nine cats, 15 dogs, four rabbits and three guinea pigs. Another six dogs and four cats have been put on hold, she said, with their future owners expected to pick them up soon.

On Tuesday, the Lancaster County SPCA announced the impending shutdown, noting that it would be the last day that the shelter would accept owner-surrendered pets and stray cats. From now until its shutdown, expected in mid-August, the shelter will take in only stray dogs from law enforcement officials in municipalities contracted with the SPCA. The public will still be able to adopt these dogs when they become available for adoption, Ericson said.

When the shelter is shuttered, she said, she has no idea what the police will do with the dogs they recover.

According to Ericson, the shutdown came as something of a surprise to employees, though they knew the shelter had been struggling.

"We knew that we were struggling and we were looking for what options we still had," she said. "This year the adoption rate was lower than normal and we just didn't bounce back from that financial challenge. So, unfortunately, this has to end, but it certainly wasn't for a lack of trying."

In an effort to help find homes for the aminals remaining at the shelter, the Lancaster County SPCA reduced adoption fees for dogs to $100 and made adoption costs for all other animals free.

Ericson said she believes the several remaining animals yet to be put up for adoption — there are some kittens that she said will be available Thursday — will find homes, but the SPCA has worked with area rescues in case they need to move animals once the shelter is shuttered.

The Lancaster County SPCA is expected to cease operations by mid-August.

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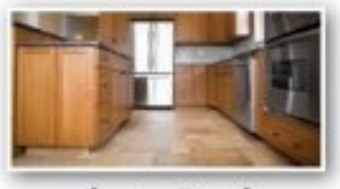

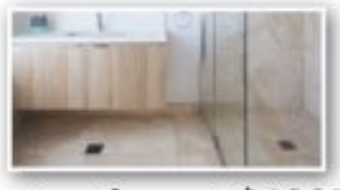

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PA CORRUPTION

Pennsylvania mayors charged in pay-to-play corruption case

The mayor of Allentown is among the latest officials charged in a long-running federal corruption investigation, according to indictments unsealed on Wednesday.

Edwin Pawlowski, a Democrat who is running for a fourth term, was one of five people accused of bribery, extortion, wire fraud and other charges in two indictments that included a total of 73 counts.

Seven others have already pleaded guilty in the probe. Wednesday's new defendants include Vaughn Spencer, 70, a Democrat who previously served as the first black mayor of Reading.

"Pawlowski and Spencer essentially put a 'for sale' sign on City Hall and sold out to the highest bidder," said Louis Lappen, the acting U.S. attorney in Philadelphia.

At his own news conference, Pawlowski called that accusation "fiction" and vowed to keep running for reelection.

"I want to make it clear to everyone: I have done nothing wrong, nor have I ever accepted a dime beyond my salary," he said. "In no way, shape or form was City Hall ever up for sale."

Pawlowski, who has also run unsuccessfully for governor and U.S. Senate, is accused of accepting more than $150,000 in contributions to his various campaigns from vendors with the understanding they would receive city contracts in exchange.

The mayor sought to cover up the scheme by deleting emails, instructing his campaign aides to do the same and sweeping his office for listening devices installed by law enforcement, the indictment said.

Spencer, meanwhile, was charged with a similar scheme in which he allegedly directed a contract to a donor's engineering firm. He is also accused of agreeing to bribe the city council president in exchange for repealing campaign finance limits. REUTERS

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Flooding like this in Miami last year will get a lot more common. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Coastal areas in the US could be flooded by 2100: Report

It's not looking good. ERIN TIERNAN

Whether or not you want to admit climate change is real, scientists say the effects of a warming climate are putting sea level rise into hyper drive — a new map predicts most coastal communities in the U.S. will be totally submerged under water by 2100 or at least see regular flooding as a result of man-made climate change.

The interactive map by the Union of Concerned Scientists is a companion to their peer-reviewed reported, "When Rising Seas Hit Home." The report spells out the consequences of rising seas levels, showing which coastal communities will be largely submerged by 2100 and which will see regular flooding by that year as a result of human-induced climate change.

Regular flooding is defined as occurring at least 26 days out of the year.

"In this scenario, global warming is limited to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, ice sheets melt more slowly, and sea levels rise less rapidly. By 2100, seas rise by 1.6 feet globally," the scientists write.

Though the politics of climate change might make it seem a lot of people don't believe that climate change is real, deniers are actually in the minority. Almost 70 percent of Americans think climate change is a real, manmade threat.

There is another segment of the population — Boomers and Gen X-ers, we're looking at you — who don't believe they'll have to deal with the consequences of climate change in their lifetime, and on the whole, they're right. The maps indicate the most serious flooding won't occur until about 2065.

So what can be done?

The report outlines what some communities are already doing and what efforts are underway to mitigate the devastating effects of rising tides on coastal areas. For one, Miami has built one of the best water pumping systems in the world to protect its residents despite the fact that its governor has prohibited the term "climate change" from being used on official documents.

But rather than simply keeping the waters at bay, the scientists suggest nearly 400 at-risk communities could be saved if the country agreed to and acted the terms of the Paris Climate Agreement, an agreement President Donald Trump has backed away from since taking office.

Senators seek ban on brain-damaging insecticide

The EPA has claimed it will revisit a possible chlorpyrifos ban in 2022. GETTY IMAGES

Chlorpyrifos is a known neurotoxin in the same chemical family as sarin nerve gas, and is shown to cause brain damage in kids.

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An attempt to ban a pesticide known to cause brain damage in children was denied by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), but a group of Democratic senators hope to change that with a new bill.

The bill, introduced by New Mexico Sen. Tom Udall, seeks to outlaw chlorpyrifos, an agricultural insecticide used on strawberries, apples and broccoli, among other fruits and vegetables. The chemical is classified as a neurotoxin by the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and listed in the same chemical family as sarin nerve gas, but the EPA denied a petition to ban it on March 29. On July 18, Federal appeals court rejected a petition by environmental groups to force the agency into a ban.

The Protect Children, Farmers and Farmworkers From Nerve Agent Pesticides Act of 2017 was co-sponsored by senators Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Cory Booker of New Jersey, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Ben Cardin of Maryland, Kamala Harris of California, Richard Durbin of Illinois and Ed Markey of Massachusetts.

Three long-term studies found that chlorpyrifos has the potential to cause significant brain damage in both fetuses and children by "interrupting the electrochemical processes that nerves use to communicate with muscles and other nerves," according to the Pesticide Encyclopedia. It's also an endocrine disruptor that has the potential to create "adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune effects," according to the National Institutes of Health.

"No family should be facing a life of special needs because of chlorpyrifos," supporters of the bill said in a statement, according to EcoWatch. "If the EPA refuses to protect the health of our children and agricultural workers, then lawmakers from both sides of the aisle must do their job and back the chlorpyrifos ban bill."

The EPA said more study into they science around chlorpyrifos is needed, and it will revisit a possible ban in 2022.

> *"No family should be facing a life of special needs because of chlorpyrifos."*
> A statement from supporters of the ban

"We need to provide regulatory certainty to the thousands of American farms that rely on chlorpyrifos, while still protecting human health and the environment," EPA Director Scott Pruitt said in a written statement after the reversal. Both Pruitt and President Donald Trump have vowed to roll back environmental regulations.

"By reversing the previous administration's steps to ban one of the most widely used pesticides in the world, we are returning to using sound science in decision-making," he added.

Chlorpyrifos is produced by several companies, including Dow Chemical, which praised the appeals court decision to keep the chemical legal.

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Many Americans think Sean Spicer heads Russia probe

Lordy.

MICHAEL MARTIN
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Many Americans mistakenly believe Sean Spicer is overseeing the investigation into Trump's alleged ties to Russia. GETTY IMAGES

If 2016 was the election of the low-information voter, a new survey suggests that demographic is hitting new depths, even after their preferred candidate took the White House. A new poll shows that 10 percent of Americans believe that recently resigned White House press secretary Sean Spicer is heading the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Only 47 percent of respondents to a survey by Pew Research Center correctly identified former FBI Director Robert Mueller as head of the Russia investigation. Additionally, 53 percent answered the question incorrectly (31 percent) or didn't know the answer (22 percent).

The poll, which was in the form of a multiple-choice quiz and which surveyed 1,002 adults, found that Americans' ignorance about their elected officials doesn't stop there. Many respondents couldn't correctly identify other political figures from every branch of government.

Only 44 percent knew that the secretary of state is Rex Tillerson. Although 62 percent knew the speaker of the House is Paul Ryan, and 45 percent correctly named Neil Gorsuch as a Supreme Court justice.

The poll results even come after several weeks in which Robert Mueller's name has been front and center in the news, as speculation mounts that President Trump is trying to force the resignation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions as an initial step in firing Mueller.

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Facebook fights hackers

Facebook is funding new efforts to fight election hacking. GETTY IMAGES

Facebook will provide initial funding of $500,000 for a nonprofit organization that aims to help protect political parties, voting systems and information providers from hackers and propaganda attacks, the world's largest social network said on Wednesday.

The initiative, dubbed Defending Digital Democracy, is led by the former campaign chairs for Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Mitt Romney, and will initially be based at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, which announced the project last week.

Facebook said it hoped additional participants would turn it into a freestanding information-sharing center controlled by its members. Facebook, with two billion monthly users, bills itself as a vehicle for political debate and education, but was also used as a major platform to spread fake news and propaganda during the U.S. election campaign in 2016.

"Strong cryptography is a critical part of building a safe, trustworthy future."

Alex Stamos

Facebook Chief Security Officer Alex Stamos announced the company's backing at the opening of the Black Hat information security conference in Las Vegas on Wednesday. The event, named after the term for malicious hackers, is aimed mainly at corporate and government security professionals.

Stamos also urged Black Hat attendees, many of whom are leery of government intrusion, to be more open-minded about helping law enforcement track criminals and terrorists.

REUTERS

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TJ Miller finds his sincere side

The former "Silicon Valley" star tells us why "The Emoji Movie" is this generation's "Brave Little Toaster."

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TJ Miller stars as the Meh emoji with too many feelings in "The Emoji Movie." SONY PICTURES

TJ Miller may have left the HBO show "Silicon Valley," but he hasn't gone far from the world of technology.

His film "The Emoji Movie," opening Friday, turns the emojis inside our phones — everything from sushi to smiley faces — into real characters living in a world of their own. But (spoiler alert, if you can say that about a kids' movie) it's because Miller's character is different that he helps save the day.

"What we remind people is to just be yourself and know that you have limitless potential," says the actor. "I would love to hammer that f—ing message home right now for the entire summer."

Miller plays Gene, who's supposed to be the Meh emoji but is constantly overflowing with emotions. This is distressing to his parents, both Meh emojis themselves, and his career prospects — Gene lives in Textopolis, the city inside of a phone owned by a young boy named Alex.

If you don't — or in Gene's case, can't — do what you were designed to do, you're deleted. That idea reminded Miller of the animated film that was a formative part of his childhood.

"'The Brave Little Toaster' was a sad but wonderful tale," he recalls. "What a good message to be like, 'Don't be consumerist and wasteful, but care about the objects that you have and fix things that are broken instead of throwing them away,' and that's what this movie is about.

"Because Gene is a malfunction, they're trying to delete him and everyone he's involved with, so you really come to care about these digital entities in a way that also is reflective of how much we love our phones."

Miller has some illustrious company for Gene's adventure, with his friend, the Hi-5 emoji (James Corden), a delightfully tongue-in-cheek turn by Sir Patrick Stewart as the Poop emoji, and the hacker Jailbreak (Anna Faris). The movie packs in a ton of messages, from realizing that Likes and Favorites don't add up to true friends, self-acceptance and cautioning about online harassment. "We say trolling is the worst of the worst things to do with your time, and that's pretty important 'cause our president is a troll," he says.

But it's Jailbreak and her arc that Miller points to as a surprising instance of progressive feminism for an animated feature. The character literally smashes through a glass ceiling, but beyond that she learns that she doesn't have to reject being feminine to be powerful.

"It's not just girls can do anything, it's that it's as important to be a princess or fairy as a hacker or a leader," he explains.

Much of Miller's joy from doing animated films — he's also had parts in "Big Hero 6" and "How to Train Your Dragon" — comes from the delight they bring to kids who may take the experience with them forever. It's a very different kind of comedy from "Silicon Valley," but one that he's cultivated since starting his career as a stand-up comic in Chicago.

GETTY

"You need that full skillset to do comedy in an animated feature because a great animated film that takes you on a roller coaster of emotions," he explains.

"And while children don't deserve to laugh as much as adults because they're not aware of their own mortality, I still think it's important for kids to laugh."

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'Room 104' has something for everyone

In HBO's new 12-part anthology series from the Duplass Brothers, the only recurring character is a budget-hotel room.

KATE MOONEY
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Episode 1, "Ralphie," depicts a babysitter's worst nightmare. HBO/JORDAN ALTHAUS

Mark and Jay Duplass are a prolific duo. The sibling writer-director-actor-producers have put out more than 25 shows and films together, including HBO's "Togetherness" — not to mention the projects they've helmed individually.

Up next, they have a show on HBO that calls to mind their more experimental indie work, such as the films "Creep" or "The One I Love": "Room 104," a 12-part anthology series premiering Friday, July 28 at 11:30 p.m. Each episode takes place within the same semi-seedy, budget hotel room and features a completely different story line and cast. The concept calls to mind the Quentin Tarantino film "Four Rooms," but the difference here is none of the stories are linked.

The only thing connecting each 20-to-30-minute episode is the room itself. While you might not take to every installment, with such a wide range of subject matter and genres, you're bound to enjoy at least one of 12.

The first episode, "Ralphie," will likely appeal to horror fans. When a young woman arrives at Room 104 to babysit, she discovers something is very wrong with the young boy and loses her grip on reality along the way. Another episode, "My Love," is a touching look at an elderly couple that books a night at the hotel to relive their first night together. In "The Knockadoo," a woman meets up with a quack spiritual adviser who is supposed to help her transcend the material world, but what ends up happening is much more creepy than occult.

Mark Duplass wrote seven of the 12 episodes, which are each helmed by newbie directors. Except for a few familiar faces, including Jay Duplass, James Van Der Beek, Amy Landecker and Mae Whitman, the series mainly features no-name actors. According to IndieWire, Mark Duplass told the audience at ATX TV Fest's "Room 104" premiere that this enabled him to "take creative risks" while keeping the series low-budget and giving directors just starting out an opportunity for some name recognition. We recommend settling in on Friday evenings — maybe smoking some weed first to get in the mind-set — and booking a night in "Room 104."

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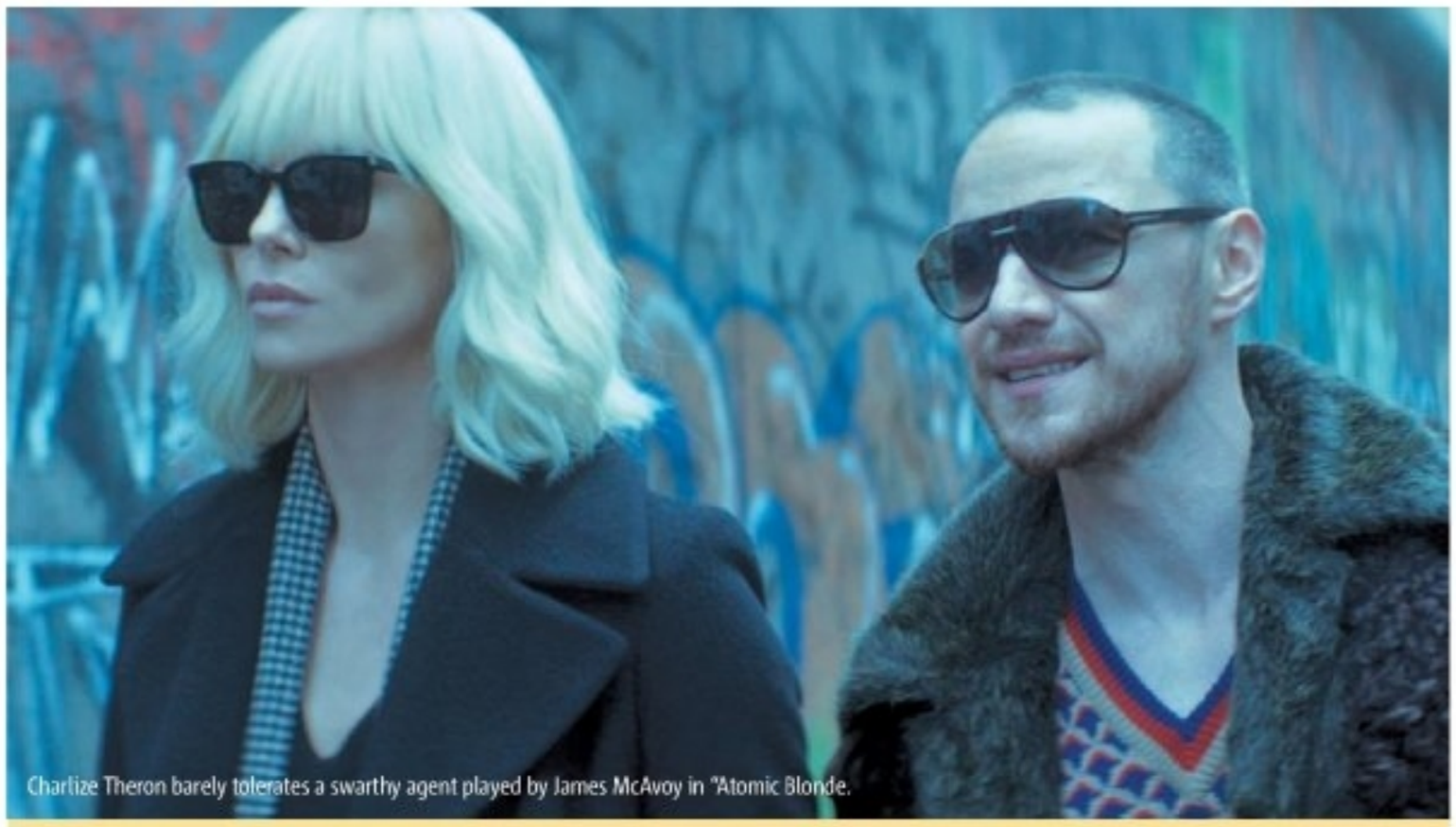

Charlize Theron barely tolerates a swarthy agent played by James McAvoy in "Atomic Blonde."

"Atomic Blonde"

Director: David Leitch
Stars: Charlize Theron, James McAvoy
Rating: R

●●●○○

At the time it was a hell of a breakup: The two directors of "John Wick" split ways after making one of the leanest, meanest action movies in recent memory. But at least something worked out in the end. What directors Chad Stahelski and David Leitch did was like a hydra cutting off its own head. From the wound sprouted two lean, mean, old-school action movies. Stahelski took the "John Wick" sequel, while Leitch lighted out with "Atomic Blonde," in which Charlize Theron gets to go Keanu on a bunch of doomed randos.

But "Atomic Blonde" is more John Le Carre than "John Wick." In other words, you probably won't be able to explain the plot afterward if a gun was pointed at your head. It unleashes Theron's MI6 agent Lorraine Broughton on Berlin right before the Wall comes down in 1989. The English government has sent her there to infiltrate a Russian spy ring that's been picking off fellow agents, and to get her hands on the MacGuffin: a sought-after list that might not be terribly handy once Communism falls. Or something.

The ads promise relentless ass-whooping, with our Amazonian bruiser felling untold minions with rope, with high heels, with nightsticks nicked from police, with hot plates. But Leitch spaces out his heroic smackdowns conservatively.

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That's Charlize Theron, buried under hair, dispatching two of about 1000 minions in "Atomic Blonde." ALL PHOTOS FOCUS FEATURES

Most of the time it's lost in a dense fog of intrigue, shifting allegiances and Cold War misery porn. When he's not delivering the goods — including an epic long take battle that starts on a staircase and ends by out-"Children of Men"-ing "Children of Men" — Leitch is drowning the film in '80s-fetish style. The Dolby Surround blasts New Order and Depeche Mode and George Michael as Theron slinks stonefaced through dark alleys and neon nightclubs and dilapidated GDR buildings, pausing only to ponder over cigarettes or drop ice cubes in a glass of Stoli.

Frankly, "Atomic Blonde" isn't always worth following. It's like a Cold War thriller hatched by someone who vaguely remembers seeing some movies about it once decades ago, maybe. It's all surface.

But what a surface. As an action director, Leitch is every bit Stahelski's equal. Sometimes his camera stands back and simply lets us drink in every blow; other times it's a fellow dancer, moving with Theron's every high-kick or coldcock. And like "John Wick: Chapter 2," "Atomic Blonde" is weird. Come for the part where Charlize battles a guy with a corkscrew; stay for the part where she fights a dude in a movie theater in front of a screen playing Andrei Tarkovsky's "Stalker." MATT PRIGGE

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CHRISTMAS IN JULY CHRISTMAS IN JULY CHRISTMAS IN JULY

The Who2K video-game tournament comes with a cash prize

Competitors meet monthly at secret locations to do battle in the hottest sports titles of the year.

MIKE FENN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Video games have progressed in terms of quality and depth over the years, and fans have formed several subcultures as a result. One of the larger subcultures is esports, which is basically professional video gaming.

But unlike traditional sports, one does not have to be an athlete to participate — or even dominate — the world of esports. All you need is a superb knowledge of the latest video games, stellar hand-eye coordination and a willingness to go head-to-head with fellow gamers all over the world.

Here in Philadelphia, one video-game enthusiast is capitalizing on the esports craze to build community. Once a month, James Nix holds WhoRunPhilly2K, in which as many as 40 gamers meet in a private location to compete to win cash prizes.

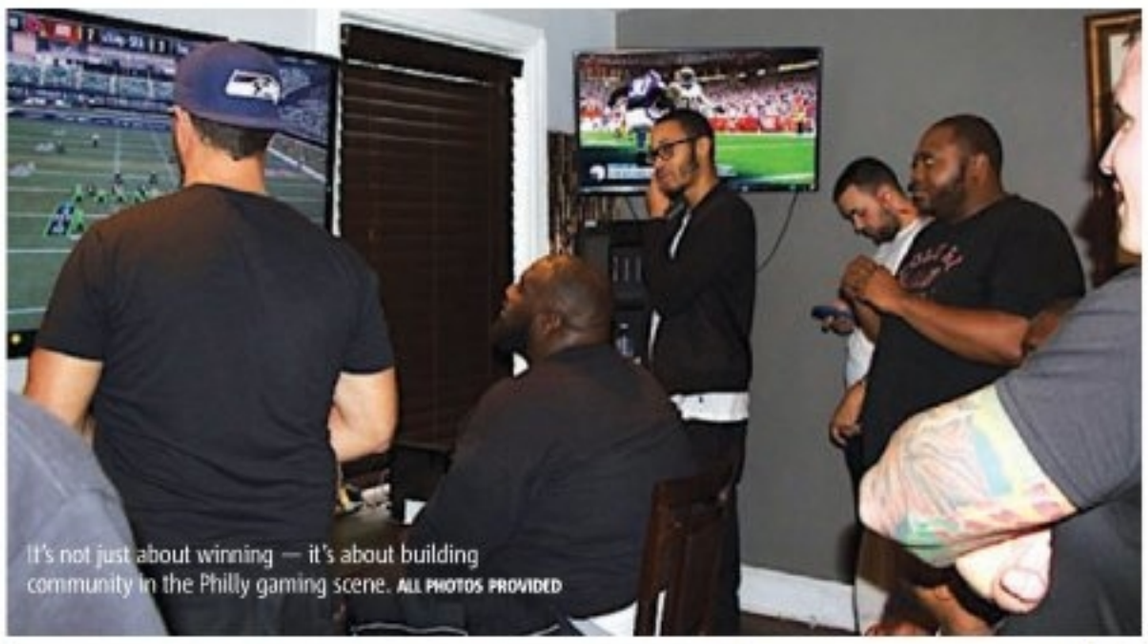
"I just figured, why not create something where I can turn it into not just a great competitive video game tournament, but also something positive where the players can come and have a good time once a month?" Nix says.

The next WhoRunPhilly2K events will be July 29 and Aug. 19. Locations for both tournaments are secret and will be revealed to contestants after they enter.

Nix is focused on building and strengthening the Philadelphia sports-gaming community. Two years and 24 tournaments in, WhoRunPhilly2K has given players from ages 11 to 40 something to do other than "just standing on the corners all day" or "staying in the house bored."

Nix focuses his events on the "NBA 2K" and "Madden" games. Both series have proved extremely popular with esports players, and both release new versions of each year to keep pace with changing rules and rosters in the real-world sports. The July event will center around "NBA 2K17," while the August event will focus on "Madden 2017" (just in time for football season). The top prize at each event is $500.

In its initial two years, WhoRunPhilly2K has attracted some serious competitors. One gamer, "Dubby," is the event's six-time "Madden" winner and has also displayed his skills on the national level. "He is the Madden Bowl Champion this year—the game played on NFL Network during the lead-up to the Super Bowl," Nix says. "He probably won over $200,000 from EA Sports just this year in 'Madden.' What can you say? The guy is good in 'Madden'!"



It's not just about winning — it's about building community in the Philly gaming scene. ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

The top prize at each Who2K event is $500.

If you go

WhoRunPhilly2K July tournament
Saturday, July 28,
Saturday, Aug. 19
Time and location TBA
Entry fee: $20
whorunphilly2k.com

Gamer "Lil," the reigning champ for the "2K" game tournaments, is the only player to have attended every WhoRunPhilly2K tournament since its inception.

Serious and casual gamers alike are invited to come out to Nix's monthly event, where, no matter what, he promises a "good time." And a stronger community.

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Aside from classic cars, there are plenty of custom cars. PROVIDED

Mamma Maria at 1637 East Passyunk Ave. will be serving up Italian favorites. KATERI LIKOUDIS

5 Things you can't miss at the 2017 East Passyunk Car Show

The event is now in its 12th year.

JENNIFER LOGUE
@jenniferlogue
jennifer.logue@metro.us

Do classic cars really get your engine going? How about souped-up muscle cars? Then you'd better make plans to check out the 12th Annual East Passyunk Car Show and Festival on Sunday, July 30. From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., 140 cars of all kinds will line East Passyunk Avenue for this free-to-attend event that features fun for the whole family.

"The 12th Annual Car Show and Street Festival is back and bigger than ever," says East Passyunk Avenue Business Improvement District Director Pam Zenzola. "Families from around the tristate area flock to the East Passyunk area to cruise the cars, enjoy live music on every block and taste authentic South Philly cooking.

Excited? Here are five things you can't miss at the 12th Annual East Passyunk Car Show.

The Cars

From classic cars to antique cars to custom cars and muscle cars, you are bound to see some really interesting vehicles at the East Passyunk Car Show. Have a cool car you want to show off? You can enter your own car for $20 at registration (between 8 a.m. and noon) and be in the running to win a trophy in categories like Top 50, Best Stock, Best Modified, Best Engine, Best Paint, Best '50s Custom, Best Street Rod, Best Low Rider, Best Truck, Best Motorcycle and Best of Show Car and Motorcycle.

$5 food and drink specials

You'll definitely want to come hungry to the Car Show because a ton of local restaurants and bars are serving up $5 food and drink Specials. A few highlights include Marra's $5 meatball sandwich on a Sarcone roll; Adobe Cafe's $5 burritos and margaritas and FUEL's $5 smoothies or juices.

Kid's activities

Perhaps your children will be entertained enough by all the cool cars and yummy treats. Just in case they aren't, bring them over to the Kid Zone at Broad and McKean where they can play on a Moon Bounce, make car-themed crafts and play games to win prizes.

Craft show

So many pretty things, so little time! After you've seen enough cars, walk over to the Singing Fountain for a craft show hosted by the adorable East Passyunk shop, Nice Things Handmade. Splurge on everything from home decor, fashion accessories, art, stuffed animals, jewelry, bags and more.

Live music

No matter where you decide to spend your time at the East Passyunk Car Show this year, you will hear live music on every block. Featured acts include The Drive In's, Blue Pharoahs, Joey Joy, DJ Lindsay Marie, DJ Christopher DJ, Brown Sugar, Las Palabras and Ralphie Head.

YOUR WEEKEND STARTS NOW

FESTIVALS

12th Annual Car Show and Street Festival

A staple of the East Passyunk neighborhood, this car show and food-heavy festival returns for its 12th year, bringing with it antique, muscle and custom cars, street foods, summer libations, live music and a craft show. Those wishing to participate in the show can register between 8 a.m. and noon the day of; cost of participation for car showers is $20.

July 30, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
East Passyunk Avenue
1485 McKean St.
visiteastpassyunk.com
Pay as you go

ART

'stART'r Box Initiative

Artists Kid Hazo, Myke Chambers, Amberella and more than two dozen others come together for a collaborative art show that encourages attendees to bring art supplies—crayons, colored pencils, paints and more—to donate to area schools. The event supports the launch of VURT, an organization dedicated to inspiring urban communities through public art.

FOOD & DRINK

PROVIDED

Chef Garces' take on pierogies

Forget burrito sushi, Chef Jose Garces has our newest food combo obsession. The famed Philly-based chef teamed up with Mrs. T's Pierogies to create Chicken-Fried Pierogies, deep-fried potato dumplins and pickles served with a rich buttermilk ranch dip. You'll find the Southern-inspired dish is at his brand new pop-up, Balcony Bar at The Kimmel, open **Wednesday-Friday through September 1.**

July 28, 7 p.m.,
Tattooed Mom
530 South St.,
tattooedmomphilly.com, Free

BOOKS

Fantastic Beasts Weekend

Saturday is filled with all sorts of kid-friendly events: a trivia challenge, a story-time reading, an opportunity to build an all-new fantasy world and a screening of the "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" film. Adults can swing back around on Sunday for a discussion about race and sexuality in the world of Harry Potter.

July 29 through July 30
Big Blue Marble Bookstore
551 Carpenter Lane
bigbluemarblebooks.com
Free

A Hero Like Me

For its first-ever event, the black-woman-owned comic shop hosts a discussion about representation of women, queers and people of color in comics and video games. Come prepared to vent about the worst tropes in even your most beloved comics.

12TH ANNUAL EAST PASSYUNK
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July 29, 1 p.m.
Amalgam Comics & Coffeehouse
2578 Frankford Ave.
facebook.com/amalgamphilly
Free

LGBT

Boys of Summer Main Event

A yearly summer party, Boys of Summer returns for its 14th year, featuring a pack of studs entertaining in their swimwear, as well as a headline performance from gender-bending pop musician SIR JET. A portion of admission sales go to local LGBT homeless shelter Home for Hope.
July 29, 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Voyeur Nightclub
1221 Saint James St.
phillygaycalendar.com/bos
$15

DANCE

Salsa Lessons

Show up promptly at 8 p.m. for an hour of free salsa before taking those moves out for a twirl on the dance floor, to the sound of DJ Rom and Expo. Drink specials, like a "Salsa Citywide," run all night.
July 27, 8 p.m.
South Bowl, 19 E. Oregon Ave.
southbowlphilly.com, Free

FOOD & DRINK

The Philly Ice Cream Scoop

Reading Terminal Market calls for a mass congregation of Philly's best ice cream, bringing together Franklin Fountain, Bassetts, Little Baby's, Lil' Pop Shop and Zsa's for eating contests, demonstrations, arts and crafts and—intriguingly—ice cream shuffleboard. Peruse the vendors for special offerings that range from an ice cream whoopee pie to funnel cake with ice cream.
July 29, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Reading Terminal Market
51 N. 12th St.
Pay as you go,
eadingterminalmarket.org

2SP Birthday Party

The makers of Delco Lager celebrate their first anniversary with the launch of their Second Anniversary Ale, tastings of limited releases Champagne Wit and Cranny Wit and a live performance from Delaware-based band Chorduroy. And, of course, there will be cake.
July 29, 3 p.m.
2SP Brewing Company
120 Concord Road, Aston
2spbrewing.com, Pay as you go

THEATER

PROVIDED

Shakespeare in Clark Park: Coriolanus

Kittson O'Neill directs this open-to-everyone performance of Shakespeare's tragedy—one of his last, notably — about a female soldier who, after a successful military run, takes up political leadership. Whether the people of Rome will allow it is the mystery.
July 26 through July 30, 7 p.m.
Clark Park, 4300 Baltimore Ave.
shakespeareinclarkpark.org, Free

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Casting for *Annie*
Wednesday, September 6th, 2017

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1) Submit your child's photo and a resume to be considered for an audition:
Email WSTCastingOffice@gmail.com with name, parent, age, and contact info.

2) Selected kids will be asked to bring a song and learn a simple dance.

3) All kids must be available for performance dates and begin rehearsals on October 17th, 2017.

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The hidden gem that is St. Croix won't remain off the radar for long.

JENNIFER LOGUE
@jenniferlogue
jennifer.logue@metro.us

If you're in need of a tropical-island escape, look no further than St. Croix, the largest and perhaps most undiscovered of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Made up of two main towns on opposite sides of the island (Christiansted on the eastern side and Frederiksted on the western side), its long history of immigration makes St. Croix a destination teeming with diversity.

From beautiful beaches to a blossoming multicultural food scene, here are seven reasons to drop what you're doing and go to St. Croix right now.

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Celebrity Cruises — 7-Day Alaska — $529* pp — Ocean View $899* pp, Taxes & fees $215.92pp, Balcony $1499* pp
Holland America Line — 7-Day Alaska — $549* pp — Ocean View $639* pp, Suite $2709* pp

CARIBBEAN/BAHAMAS

Royal Caribbean — 7-Day Caribbean — $529* pp — Ocean View $619* pp, Taxes & fees $148.75pp, Balcony $659* pp
NCL Norwegian — 7-Day Bahamas — $549* pp — Ocean View $699* pp, Balcony $749* pp
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NCL Norwegian — 10-Day Europe — $579* pp — Ocean View $749* pp, Balcony $999* pp

EXOTIC CRUISES

Carnival — 7-Day U.S/Canada — $529* pp — Ocean View $639* pp, Balcony $859* pp
Celebrity Cruises — 7-Day Bermuda — $699* pp — Ocean View $849* pp, Taxes & fees $196.75pp, Balcony $1099* pp
Holland America Line — 11-Day Panama — $949* pp — Ocean View $999* pp, Balcony $1499* pp
Princess Cruises — 15-Day Hawaii — $1489* pp — Ocean View $1589* pp, Balcony $2339* pp

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1. There really isn't a bad time to go.
The U.S. Virgin Islands enjoy warm weather all year, averaging 77°F during winter and 82°F in the summer — and U.S. citizens don't need a passport to go. "We encourage travelers to visit any time to enjoy our enjoyable, tropical weather," says Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty. "December through April is traditionally the busiest period of the year, but the months between May and November provide travelers with the best value for accommodations."

2. The beaches are prettier than a postcard.
You won't need any Instagram filters when capturing the beauty of St. Croix's many beaches. With their soft, white sand leading into clear, turquoise waters, it's the tropical beach paradise of your dreams (or your desktop image) come to life. While simply relaxing on the beaches is a fine way to seize the day, dive a little deeper with the island's many snorkeling and scuba tours to see all the colorful fish and coral below the surface.

3. The locals make you feel welcome.
If you live on the East Coast, you tend to keep to yourself when walking down the street. In St. Croix, however, everyone says hello to everyone in passing — including strangers. Striking up conversations with locals is so easy and they're genuinely glad to chat and share a piece of their world with you. One morning, my tour group got invited to a family reunion on the beach, complete with a pig roast, huge fruit spread and, of course, plenty of rum. Speaking of which...

4. If you love piña coladas, you've come to the right place.
The piña colada may not have been invented in St. Croix, but they taste really good here and it's probably due to all the delicious rum being made on the island. The famous Cruzan Rum Distillery is located on its western end and going on a tour is a must as it takes you through each step of the rum-making process with a little history thrown into the mix. To top it off, you get a piña colada at the end. The hardest part is taking that last sip.

5. St. Croix has an incredible food scene.
While lounging on the beach with a piña colada sounds like enough of a good time for most of us, St. Croix has quite the food scene as well. Want to eat like a local? Grab some roasted chicken and johnnycakes (fried doughy goodness) at La Reine Chicken Shack. Need some healthier fare? Head over to Ital in Paradise for grilled fish, lentil balls, colorful salads and local fruit juices. Go on the Taste of Twin City food tour for a truly immersive experience.

6. The shopping is hip and local.
St. Croix is chock full of privately owned boutiques, so when you make a purchase, you know you're getting something unique. If your wardrobe could use a splash of color (especially in the island sun), check out Asha for its beautiful silk sundresses and bohemian-inspired accessories. Looking for something you can only find in St. Croix? Go to Sonya ltd. — the home of the original Crucian-hook bracelet. In business for over 40 years, all of the bracelets are custom made in sterling silver, 14 karat gold or 18 karat gold. Position the open end of the hook outward if you're single and towards you if you're in a relationship.

7. The Centennial Promotion
This year marks the 100th anniversary of Transfer Day, when the Danish West Indies became the U.S. Virgin Islands. To celebrate, the Centennial Promotion was launched to bring even more visitors to the islands. Book a minimum three-night stay through Oct. 1, 2017, and you get $300 in credit to spend on anything from historic tours to souvenirs at select retailers and more within the U.S. Virgin Islands. Apply it toward a few rounds of golf at the popular Buccaneer Golf Course, a decadent Italian meal at Un Amore or a day of relaxation at the Hideaway Spa. The options are endless.

Live inside the 'Star Wars' universe

For a weekend, anyway, at Disney's new immersive resort.

EVA KIS
@thisiskis
eva.kis@metro.us

Disney is changing the entertainment game with its new "Star Wars" attractions and immersive hotel. DISNEY, LUCASFILM

Think you know immersive? Disney just redefined the game.

The first photos and descriptions of its new theme park attraction Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, under construction at both Disneyland in California and Walt Disney World in Florida, are out, and they're about to create a whole new genre of entertainment.

Disney Chairman Bob Chapek revealed the official name of the "Star Wars" land during the company's annual D23 Expo, including a model and renderings of what the 14-acre themed area will include — and it's breathtaking.

In the new zone, visitors will enter a spaceport at the edge of the galaxy with a similar aesthetic to the settings and starships of the first "Star Wars" films, such as a cantina based on the one at Mos Eisley.

Every aspect of the experience will be complete interactive: Guests will explore new facets of the world they know and meet creatures and droids from the movie franchise, but how those interactions go depends on how the guests perform at the lands' two missions, one aboard the Millennium Falcon and the other on the bridge of a Star Destroyer. And of course, there's themed food and drinks like blue milk.

But the biggest news out of the event is a "Star Wars"-themed hotel, where each guest will have a story line that plays out during their stay. The luxury lodgings will be designed to look like a starship, with views of outer space through its windows, and all of the workers will be in character. Guests would wear uniforms, with tickets rumored to be priced around $1,000 per person for a two-night stay.

"All along, we have said this will be game changing, and through the model we can begin to see how truly epic these immersive new worlds will be," according to a statement from Chapek.

The "Star Wars"-themed zones are scheduled to open to guests in 2019. There's no opening date yet for the immersive hotel.

ENTERTAINMENT

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AND THE BOARD OF COMEDY
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Eagles trade away Barbre, cut Smith

The Eagles save more than $3.5 million with their roster moves Wednesday.

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Marcus Smith will go down as one of the all-time worst draft picks in Eagles history. GETTY IMAGES

Conscious or not, the Eagles continue to shed the few parts remaining from the failed Chip Kelly experiment.

Wednesday afternoon the team announced it had cut ties with offensive lineman Allen Barbre (signed by Kelly before the 2013 season) and Marcus Smith (the team's first-round pick in 2014).

Much has been written and fans have often felt bemused at how the Eagles stretched for Smith in a bizarre first round instead of taking Allen Robinson or Deone Buchanan.

Smith played a little bit better in 2016 getting his first NFL sack and working his way into the defensive line rotation, but he was one of a few players skipping voluntary minicamp back in the spring and clearly wasn't in the team's plans for 2017. He also was likely a victim of a numbers game, with Chris Long, Vinny Curry, Brandon Graham and rookie Derek Barnett seemingly making up the defensive end corps.

On the offensive line, Barbre's move (it was first reported as a release, later as a trade) comes a bit more as a shock as he was a valued and versatile offensive lineman who has started at multiple positions. The Broncos will acquire Barbre in exchange for a conditional seventh round pick in 2019. However, offensive coordinator Frank Reich announced that he was planning to tag Isaac Seumalo as a starting guard, with Stefen Wisniewski and Chance Warmack tagged to back up he and Brandon Brooks.

The combined releases open up a much-needed $3.53 million in salary cap space for the Eagles and come a day before veterans report to training camp.

Wentz says golf outing with receivers 'was a disaster'

It's no secret that athletes are a competitive bunch.

So it comes as little surprise that to blow off some steam, Carson Wentz invited the pack of talented Eagles wide receivers staying in Fargo, North Dakota, with him to work out, toss the ball around and build chemistry earlier this month to play a little golf that the level of competition was fierce.

As was the learning curve with a golf club.

"It went great," Wentz recalled to the media Tuesday after practice with rookies and selected veterans at training camp. "We got a good number of guys out there, had a lot of fun, got some really good work out there on the field and in a new facility they had. We had some fun, went out on the lake, played some golf it was a disaster. It took eight of us four and a half hours to play a best ball scramble, but it was good to have that bonding time off the field."

While videos surfaced on social media of other activities from the week, like a hilarious paddle board failure from Shelton Gibson, no footage of the golf outing was made consumable to fans.

"The golf course, I have never seen so many swings and misses," Wentz remarked with a smirk.

Could anyone make good contact on the links?

"I wouldn't say anyone was the best who wasnt the worst? Maybe Mack [Hollins]," Wentz said.

"They were a bunch of fish out of water."

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Which two QBs will Eagles keep?

Will the Eagles hang on to Nick Foles, Matt McGloin or both when camp breaks?

LUKE MILLER
@MetroPhilly
sports@metro.us

History suggests either Nick Foles or Matt McGloin will be cut by the end of training camp. GETTY IMAGES

This is the first segment of a group of pieces breaking down the Eagles' position groups with an eye toward predicting a final 53-man roster. Naturally, we'll start with the quarterbacks. The biggest question here isn't who will be starting for the Eagles in Washington Sept. 1, but how many quarterbacks the Eagles will keep on the roster and which ones they might be.

Lock: Carson Wentz

The first quarterback since Donovan McNabb to start 16 games for the Eagles, Wentz's future has been synonymous with the Eagles' since they traded up to select him second overall in the 2016 draft. Every step the franchise has made since drafting him has reaffirmed their belief in the second year signal caller. They traded Sam Bradford to the Vikings and started Wentz Week 1 last season and surrounded him with Alshon Jeffery, LeGarrette Blount, and Torrey Smith this off-season.

Going into Year 2, Wentz's off-season has been focused on mechanics and developing chemistry (see the just-completed North Dakota retreat) with his new — and old — weapons. His status as the Eagles starting quarterback is not in doubt.

The Bubble: Nick Foles, Matt McGloin

One of these two will certainly be Eagles, and Foles appears to have the early advantage. He has been the second man up after Wentz in practice this summer, signed the more expensive contract, and has a history with the organization and coaches that drafted him.

Shortly after ridding themselves of Chase Daniel's three year, $21 million contract, deemed excessive for a backup quarterback, the Eagles signed Foles to a two-year, $11 million deal.

Foles has won as a starter (20-16 in his career, including a 1-5 record as a rookie with the aimless 2012 Eagles) and a backup (stepping in to win two games for the Chiefs last season when Alex Smith was injured).

The height of his career was the 2013 season in Philadelphia where he threw 27 touchdowns and just two interceptions and led the team on a 7-1 finishing run to make the postseason. Since being traded for Bradford, he lost the job in Los Angeles and served as a midseason replacement in Kansas City.

McGloin meanwhile, was similarly pressed into starting duty early, where the undrafted rookie went 1-5 with eight touchdowns and eight interceptions. More recently he has served as the backup to Derek Carr but missed a chance to start the Raiders first playoff appearance in over a decade when he was injured in Week 17 last season. He has signed a one year,

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$800,000 contract.

Three quarterbacks haven't thrown a pass during a season for the Eagles since 2014, when Matt Barkley had one incompletion in relief of Mark Sanchez against the Panthers.

Practice Squad: Dane Evans

It's been G.J. Kinne; it's been Aaron Murray, and when it was most interesting, it was Tim Tebow. This year the training camp quarterback with the longest-odds at a roster spot is Dane Evans. As we just discussed, there's a long string of established names above the undrafted rookie from Tulsa who passed through the Jets' camp on his way to the Eagles. But none of them are eligible for the practice squad, where Evans could wind up. In that way, he could have as much to say about whether three quarterbacks make the 53-man roster as McGloin or Foles do.

He's a developmental quarterback to be sure, but that's probably just the type of player Pederson is itching to get his hands on. If the Eagles are confident enough that Evans can be an emergency starter in a worst-case scenario, they can rest their third quarterback on the practice squad and free up a precious 53-man spot for someone at a different position.

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The upcoming season will be critical for Brett Brown, as he looks to finally win some games at the helm of the Sixers. GETTY IMAGES

Brown responsible for making Sixers' point guard situation work

Brett Brown will have his hands full deciding who will handle the ball for the Sixers, Markelle Fultz or Ben Simmons.

ANDY JASNER
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While most 76ers fans are enjoying time at the Shore or on a Caribbean Island, it's always fun to look ahead.

In the not-too-distant-future, the Sixers will be holding their fifth training camp under coach Brett Brown.

For the first time in five seasons, Brown will finally have a workable roster to juggle. It's a potential playoff roster if everything works out, though that remains to be seen.

Arguably the most intriguing issue for Brown will be the daily decision of how to utilize Ben Simmons and Markelle Fultz.

Simmons, the No. 1 overall pick two years ago from LSU, sat out the entire 2016-17 season after breaking a bone in his foot toward the end of training camp. At the recently held Las Vegas Summer League, Simmons boasted to reporters that he's a "starting point guard."

Then there's Fultz, the No. 1 overall choice in this year's draft from the University of Washington.

The Sixers moved up two spots in a deal with the Boston Celtics to grab Fultz, the consensus No. 1 pick.

This is such a unique situation and it will surely become fluid as the regular season inches closer.

Can Simmons and Fultz co-exist in the same backcourt? Which player should start? Can Simmons deal with possibly coming off the bench? Will they complement one another for long stretches?

Simmons has never been known as a terrific shooter and that was evident in his one season at LSU. Fultz isn't an assassin either from beyond the arc. To be fair, both players only competed for the required one season in college before heading to the NBA so their skills aren't completely refined.

The Sixers are such a young team and they need this dynamic duo to be effective so franchise cornerstone Joel Embiid can continue to develop into an All-Star.

Simmons is the wild card here. Since Simmons sat out the entire season, it's difficult to judge how he'll respond when he finally makes his debut and works his way through the marathon NBA schedule. The same goes for Fultz.

Philadelphia had so many issues with injuries last season that it led to minute restrictions, controversy and 54 losses, which was the best of Brown's four seasons.

Assuming Simmons and Fultz are both healthy, which rookie should start? How many minutes should they each receive? Will they be able to handle the physical, mental and emotional rigor of the NBA?

There are so many questions in the middle of the summer and it's understandable. The Sixers fans on vacation will have the same questions as the season unfolds. The last four seasons – and only 75 victories – have only led to skepticism.

The good news is this: Simmons and Fultz are both incredibly talented. Both are top picks. Both have unlimited potential.

It's up to Brown to unlock that potential. If they both exceed expectations, the franchise will reap the benefits.

We shall see.

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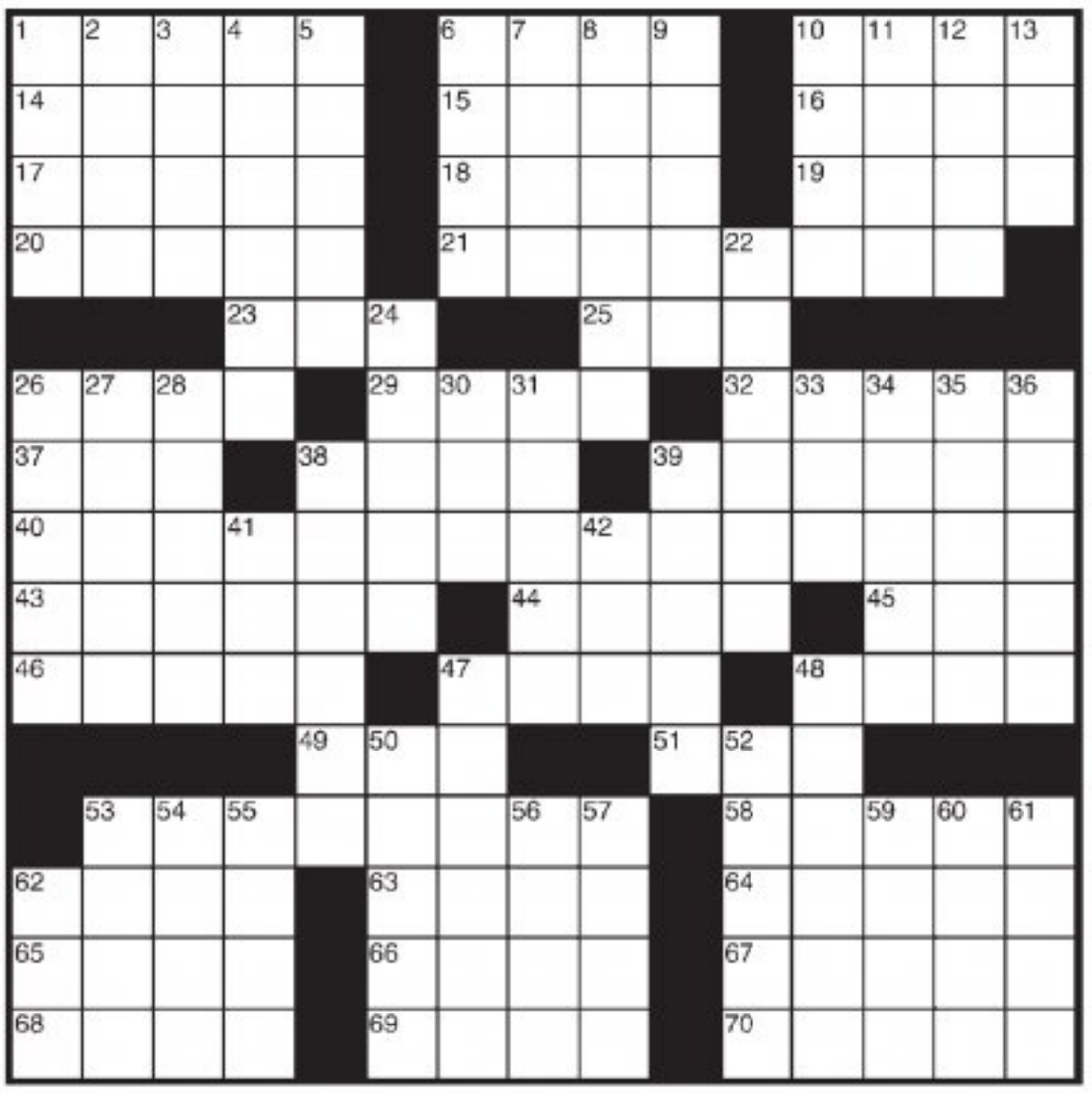
metro.us/crossword

Across
1 Bothersome
6 Coal scuttles
10 Dart about
14 "Aloha!"
15 Got off the plane
16 Ill-mannered ones
17 Metric measure
18 Find out
19 Teeming
20 Daring feat
21 Remote
23 Mind-reader's letters
25 Ecol. police
26 Grill steaks
29 Made top honors
32 Splotches
37 Scale notes
38 -- head to foot
39 Dough
40 In an informal manner
43 Did dinner
44 Frees of
45 Sushi morsel
46 Paper toys
47 Jean Auel heroine
48 Garcia or Griffith
49 Cribbage card
51 Mr. Peckinpah
53 Asset
58 Glittering
62 Prefix for "trillion"
63 Shovel or rake
64 Michael Caine role
65 Indigo plant
66 Staircase part
67 Diadem
68 Fake
69 -- St. Vincent Millay
70 Third planet out

Down
1 Comrades
2 Do magazine work
3 In -- (as found)
4 Sharper
5 Mongol tents
6 Scornful snorts
7 Margarine
8 Rang up
9 Piece of tape
10 Town meetings
11 Place to hibernate
12 Not certain
13 Mao -- -tung
22 Forbidden things
24 Cut back
26 Hen comment
27 Asian capital
28 Wide tie
30 End of some URLs
31 Georgia university
33 Rawls or Gehrig
34 Jimmy --, Daily Planet reporter
35 Made bundles
36 Timidly
38 San Joaquin Valley city
39 Greedy king of myth
41 Scratch out a living
42 None
47 On the loose
48 Ms. Earhart
50 Outlandish
52 Lessen
53 Nevada town
54 Speed-skater -- Heiden
55 Polio vaccine inventor
56 Nickel or dime
57 Jazzy Fitzgerald
59 Way, way off
60 Grime
61 You bet!
62 Beret cousin



metro.us/sudoku

easy

8	2				9			
	6	5						
4			6		7		9	
7	3	2		1		9		
		1		9		8		
		8		7		1	5	2
	5		4		3			9
						2	4	
			9				8	5

hard

4							5	
		7	6					3
	3			5			6	
	4	8		9	5			6
		5	2		6	1		
6			8	4		3	9	
	8			6			3	
1					9	5		
	2							1

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Partnership prospects are apparent, but before you get involved, question the value of the connection. Don't let anyone take advantage of you.

Taurus Mix and mingle. Communication will lead to new friends. Short trips or educational pursuits are favored. Don't get angry when you should get moving.

Gemini You'll be tempted by someone pushing an idea, investment or financial package your way. Consider the motives behind the offer before you make a commitment.

Cancer Make alterations to the way you live or to your home, but stick to a set budget. Don't let an emotional matter convince you to pay for someone else.

Leo Don't miss out just because someone is putting demands on your time. Take care of your responsibilities so that you can do the things that you enjoy.

Virgo You'll be faced with a decision that will affect your personal or professional life. Consider what needs to be done and use diplomacy to find a suitable solution.

Libra A sensitive situation will mount if you don't clear the air. Communicating honestly and observing body language will make it easier for you to know your options.

Scorpio Listen carefully and don't form opinions until you have all the facts. Acting on an assumption will get you into trouble. Take precautions while traveling.

Sagittarius A deal will excite you. Get the facts and consider the odds. Don't take a risk. Get all the details and make a calculated choice based on facts, and figures.

Capricorn Partnerships will need a little tweaking if expectations are not being met. Talks may not be easy, but they will be necessary.

Aquarius A moneymaking opportunity looks good. Explore your options and consider all the angles that will ensure your success. Get the most by focusing on what's important.

Pisces Keep a clear head when dealing with peers. Pick your side of any debate carefully. High energy and enthusiasm will be signs of promise and opportunity. EUGENIA LAST

Yesterday's answers

L	U	B	E	■	I	S	A	K	■	F	L	A	S	H
I	T	E	M	■	N	U	D	E	■	L	O	T	T	O
L	A	T	E	■	L	E	A	N	■	O	G	E	E	S
T	H	A	N	K	E	D	■	S	Q	U	I	N	T	S
■	■	■	D	E	T	E	R	■	U	R	E	■	■	■
M	O	S	E	Y	S	■	E	M	I	S	S	A	R	Y
A	N	O	D	E	■	S	P	A	N	■	T	R	E	E
O	I	L	■	D	U	E	L	I	N	G	■	G	E	M
R	O	I	L	■	N	E	A	L	■	L	O	O	S	E
I	N	D	U	S	T	R	Y	■	H	A	S	T	E	N
■	■	■	G	A	I	■	S	K	I	R	T	■	■	■
F	O	G	G	I	E	R	■	O	P	E	R	A	T	E
I	D	E	A	L	■	A	T	O	P	■	I	R	A	S
R	I	N	G	O	■	S	A	K	I	■	C	L	I	P
S	N	E	E	R	■	P	O	S	E	■	H	O	L	Y

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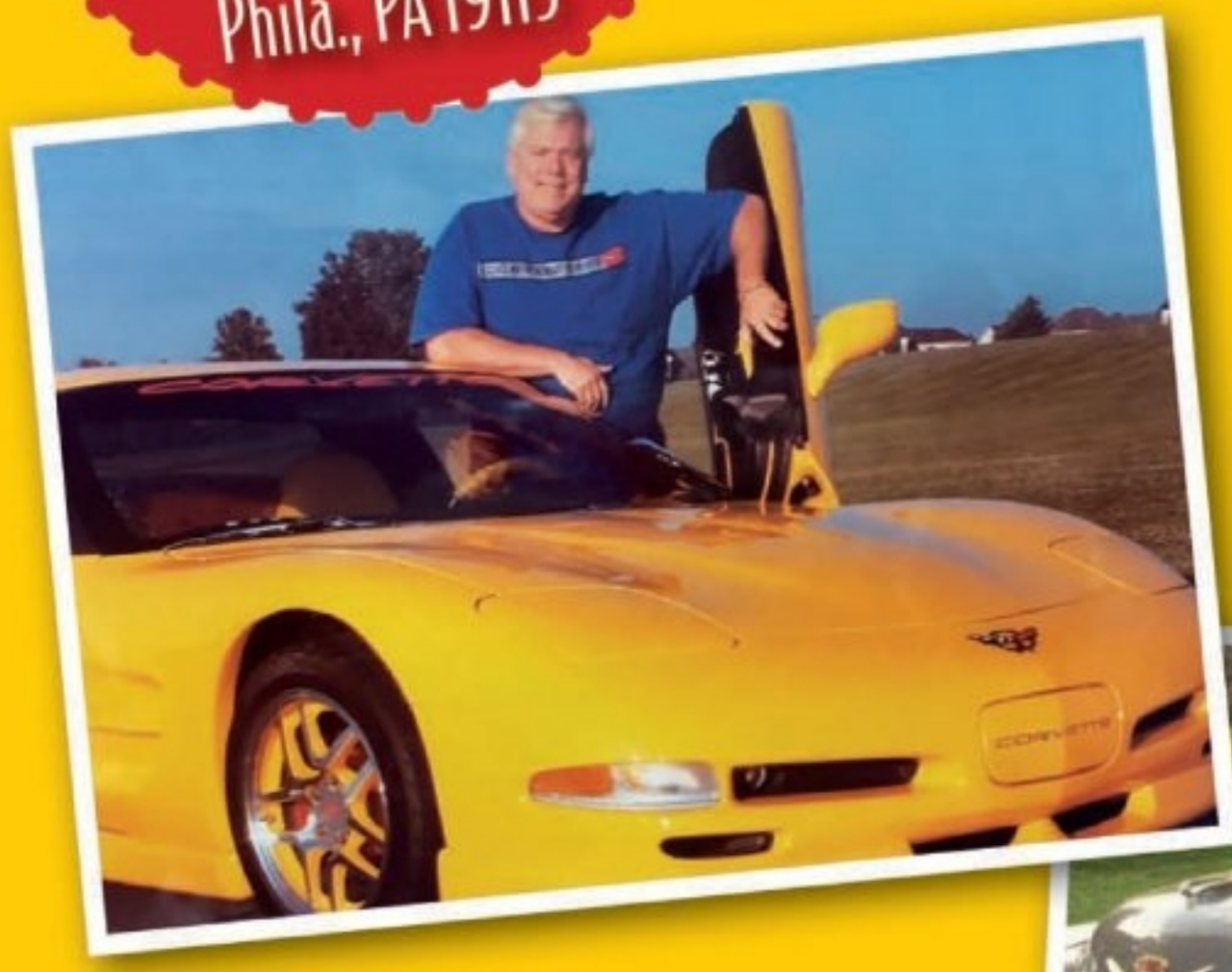

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